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THE SONNET FORMS OF WYATT AND SURREY.

THE current view with regard to the sonnet forms of Wyatt and Surrey is that Wyatt in trying to follow the traditions made a blunder which gave Surrey the hint for a happy innovation. It is agreed that Wyatt's sonnets are divided, after the Italian manner, into octave and sestet; but his custom of rhyming the last two lines of the sestet is looked upon as evidence that he unintelligently divided this part of the sonnet into a quatrain and couplet, and the error is charged to him personally. Thus Mr. Courthope¹ says: "Wyatt unaware of the secret principle unfortunately misled by his admiration for the Strambotti, endeavored to construct his sonnets on the same principle;" while Professor Schipper² prints *abba abba cddc ee* as the typical Wyatt scheme, and says nothing of other Italian types than the Petrarchan. The sonnet of Surrey is universally described as formed from the Wyatt type by breaking up the octave into quatrains with different rhymes, and substituting alternate for included rhymes in all three quatrains thus formed.

These conceptions must, I think, be modified. As for Wyatt, it is certain that his form is taken from French and Italian models. There is small doubt that he meant to divide his sestets, not into quatrains *plus* couplets, but into terzets, and that more often than not he did so. He did indeed blunder and exhibit a lack of feeling for rhetorical and rhythmic organization, but did not intentionally diverge from the model he set before him. Surrey's sonnet, moreover, appears to be unquestionably influenced by Wyatt's, but not to be a type created by loosening the bonds of Wyatt's form. It belongs in nature to a somewhat different genus, and is a strambotto built up to fourteen lines, like the eight-line or twelve-line poems of the same general organization.

For the study of Wyatt, the text requires careful consideration.

¹ *History of English Poetry*, Vol. II, p. 91.

² *Englische Metrik*, Vol. II, p. 844.

There are four sources¹ of the text of Wyatt's poems: first, a manuscript [E.] partly in Wyatt's own hand, partly by an amanuensis (Nott's Harrington MS I, reprinted with great pains by Dr. E. Flügel in *Anglia* [A.], Vols. XVIII and XIX, under the name of Egerton MS 2711); secondly, a manuscript [D.] nearly or quite contemporary with Wyatt, from a circle of persons associated with Surrey directly, with Wyatt less closely (Nott's Duke of Devonshire's MS; British Museum Add. MS 17492); thirdly, an Elizabethan manuscript miscellany [H.] (Nott's Harrington MS II; Nott's transcript is British Museum Add. MS 28635); and, finally, Tottel's printed miscellany [T.], here cited from Arber's reprint. The sonnets in E. are certainly by Wyatt, those in D. almost certainly so. The attributions of authorship in H. and T., though probably right in most cases, deserve little respect when there is a question as to a particular poem. H. and T. are independent; hence where they agree their testimony as to authorship is of weight. The text of E. is the author's own; that of D. is at least not intentionally falsified. That of T. is the worst, for it has been systematically altered, even to the extent of filling out the refrain of a rondeau to make up a complete line.

In E. there are twenty-four sonnets. D. adds four, H. three, and T. one—a total of thirty-two.

Safe conclusions can be drawn only from the twenty-eight in E. and D. They are all of one type—that Italian form with the last two lines rhyming which is commonly associated with the name of Wyatt. The octave rhymes uniformly *abba abba*.² The end of the octave is felt to be the conclusion of the first main division in twenty-two of the sonnets, the pause comes within a line in three, one has no strophic quality, and two have pauses at a distance from the end of the octave.

As for the sestet, the rhyme scheme in nearly all cases (twenty-six) is *cddcee*. So far as form goes, this type of sestet is capable of being divided into symmetrical tercets—*cdd*, *cee*, or into a quatrain and couplet—*cddc*, *ee*. Examination shows that four sonnets have no distinct pause in the sestet, and that thirteen

¹ FLÜGEL, in *Anglia*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 263 ff.

² *abba acca* in one case is the inferior reading of D.

have a distinct pause before the twelfth line. On the other hand, in nine the pause comes before the thirteenth. Two are doubtful. In five of the cases with a pause before the couplet there is a pause before the eleventh line, dividing the sestet into three pairs. On the whole, the testimony of these facts is to the effect that Wyatt regarded the sestet as a unit, tending rather to be divided into tercets than into a quatrain and couplet.

In E., Wyatt's own manuscript, ll. 5, 9, and 12 are often distinguished as beginning new stanzas—sometimes by a space, sometimes by a capital. L. 9, the beginning of the sestet, is thus distinguished, according to Dr. Flügel's reprint, sixteen times out of twenty-four; l. 12, the first line of the second tercet, fourteen times; l. 13, once. There would seem to be little doubt that the typical sonnet scheme of Wyatt is *abba | abba || cdd | cee*. The failure to attain this ideal in a tolerably large proportion of cases may most probably be laid to Wyatt's lack of ability to mass his verse-periods with any skill, a halting awkwardness of structure being evident in very many of the poems, especially where Wyatt has no original to rest on. His translations (above half the total),¹ though not literal, are usually line for line, and of course follow the periodic organization of the original, except where that is due to devices of rhetoric and syntax which Wyatt had not skill or perception to retain.

It should be noticed that for the ordinary form of Wyatt's sonnets we need seek a model no farther than in the works of Mellin de Saint Gelais. Dr. Einstein² has remarked that Saint Gelais occasionally rhymes the last two verses of his sonnets. This is the case with nearly a third of the dozen and a half of sonnets written by the French poet, some three or four rhyming as the great majority of Wyatt's do, *cdd cee*, and as many like Wyatt's eighth, *cdc dee*. All form obvious tercets. Koepfel's discovery³ of the original of one of Wyatt's sonnets in the works of Saint Gelais is well known; and the French writer may well have given the model for Wyatt's form.

¹ Cf. Nott's annotations and KOEPFEL, *Romanische Forschungen*, Vol. V, p. 67, fully cited for E. in Flügel's reprint.

² *Italian Renaissance in England* (New York, 1902), p. 371.

³ *Anglia*, Vol. XIII, p. 77.

The type, however, is not unknown in Italian poetry before Wyatt.

From the twenty-eight well-authenticated sonnets we pass to the four attributed to Wyatt in H. and T. Only one appears in both. This is "The pillar perish'd," Aldine 25.¹ It is of the standard type, with no marked pause in the sestet. For two sonnets we have only the authority of H. They are the pair beginning "The flaming sighs"—Aldine 24. These two are treated as strophes of a single poem, the rhyme scheme of each being *abba cddc effe gg*. To attribute to Wyatt this unique pair of sonnets on so slender an authority as the unsupported testimony of H. appears to me unwarrantable. The same conclusion is justified with regard to the one sonnet—"Such is the course," Aldine 17—added to Wyatt's works on the sole authority of Tottel. The rhyme scheme is *abab abab abab cc*—a form not elsewhere exemplified in Wyatt's writings.

It is thus evident that all of those sonnets which we have perfectly solid grounds for ascribing to Wyatt are of one type.

The following table will make it easy to test the accuracy with which I have analyzed the sonnets. The Aldine serial number precedes the opening words of the sonnet. *Anglia* is cited by volume and page, Nott's 1816 edition [N.], by page; T., by Arber's pages. The numbers of the lines distinguished by capitals or spaces in E. are placed last. Pauses are indicated by lines thus |; where a pause comes within a line it is indicated by square brackets inclosing the rhyme-letter of that line.

1. "The longe love." A. XVIII, 274 (E.), N. 1, T. 33. *abba | abba || cdc | cdd* 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12.
2. "Yet was I never." A. XVIII, 284 (E.), N. 2, T. 33. *abba | abba || cdd | cee* 1, 5, 9.
3. "Was never file." A. XVIII, 289 (E.), N. 2, T. 34. *abba | abba || cd | dc | ee* 1, 5, 9.
4. "The lively sparkes." A. XVIII, 479 (E.), N. 3, T. 34. *abba | abb[a] c[d]dc | ee* 1, 5, 9, 12.
5. "Such vain thought." A. XVIII, 488 (E.), N. 4, T. 35. *abba | abba || cdd | cee* 1, 5, 9, 12.

¹ Perhaps the most convenient way of citing Wyatt's sonnets is by their serial number in the Aldine edition.

6. "Unstable dream." A. XIX, 177 (E.), N. 4, T. 35. *abba | abba || cd : dce : e 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13.*
7. "Ye that in loue." A. XIX, 196 (E.), N. 5, T. 36. *abba | abba || cd : d | ce : e 1, 5, 9, 12.*
8. "If waker care." A. XIX, 201 (E.), N. 6, T. 36. *abba ab || ba cd | cd | ee (?) 1, 5, 9, 12.*
9. "Cesar when that." A. XVIII, 273 (E.), N. 6, T. 37. *abba | abba || cdd | cee 1, 9, 11, 12.*
10. "Eche man me telth." A. XVIII, 284 (E.), N. 7, T. 37. *abba a | bba || cdd | cee 1, 12.*
11. "Some fowls there be." A. XVIII, 460 (E.), N. 7, T. 38. *abba | abb | (?) ac | (?) dd | cee 1, 5, 8.*
12. "Because I still." A. XVIII, 461 (E.), N. 8, T. 38. *abba | abba || cdd | cee 1, 5, 9, 12.*
13. "I find no peace." A. XVIII, 463 (E.), N. 9, T. 39. *abba | abba | cdd | c | ee (?) 1, 5, 9, 12 (?).*
14. "My galley charged." A. XVIII, 464 (E.), N. 9, T. 39. *abba | abba | cdd | cee 1, 12.*
15. "Avisyng the bright beames." A. XVIII, 465 (E.), N. 10, T. 40. *abbaa | bba || cddce : e 1, 5, 9, 12.*
16. "My love to scorn." N. 10 (D.), T. 55. *abba | abba || cdd | c | ee.*
17. "Such is the course." N. 11, T. 62. *abab | abab | ab | ab | ce.*
18. "Ever myn hap." A. XVIII, 466 (E.), N. 12, T. 68. *abba | abbac : dd | cee 1, 5, 9, 12.*
19. "Loue, Fortune and." A. XVIII, 466 (E.), N. 12, T. 69. *abba | abba || cdd | cee 1, 5, 9, 12.*
20. "How oft haue I." A. XVIII, 467 (E.), N. 13, T. 69. *abba | abba || cddc | ee 1, 5.*
21. "Like unto these." A. XVIII, 468 (E.), N. 13, T. 70. *abba | abba || cd : d : c : ee 1, 5, 9, 12.*
22. "If amorous fayth." A. XVIII, 286 (E.), N. 14, T. 70. Practically continuous.
23. "My hart I gaue thee." A. XVIII, 288 (E.), N. 15, T. 71. *abba | abba || cd | dc | ee (?) 1, 4, 8, 11.*
24. "The flaming sighs." (Harington II) { *abba | cddc | eff | e | gg.*
N. 15. (Two sonnets.) { *abba | cddc eff | egg.*
25. "The pillar perish'd." (Harington II) N. 16, T. 72. *abba | abba | cdc dee.*
26. "Farewell Loue." A. XVIII, 287 (E.), N. 17, T. 70. *abba | abba || cddc | ee 1, 5, 9, 12.*
27. "Whoso list." A. XVIII, 276 (E.), N. 143. *abba | abba || cddcee 1, 3, 9, 12.*
28. "Divers doth use." N. 143 (D.). *abba | abba || cddc | ee.*

29. "I abide." N. 144 (D). *abba | abba || cddc | ee.*
 30. "Though I myself." A. XVIII, 463 (E.), N. 145. *abba | abba || cdd | cee 1, 12.*
 31. "To rail or jest." N. 145 (D). *abba | abba || caa | c | dd (?)*.

From the pen of Surrey we have fifteen sonnets universally accepted. One sonnet always printed with his works may be by Vaux. A table of these sonnets follows. As the sonnets are not collected in one place in the Aldine edition, the most convenient way in which to cite them is by the page in Arber's Tottel.

- T. 4, N. 19. "The soote season." *abababababab | aa.*
 T. 8, N. 16. "Love that liveth." *abab | cdcd | efef | gg.*
 T. 9a, N. 18. "In Cyprus springs." *abab | c | dcd | efef | gg.* (Awkward.)
 T. 9b, N. 3. "From Tuscan." *abab | cdcd | efef | gg.*
 [T. 10a, N. 20. "Brittle beautie." *abab abab abab | cc.* By Vaux?]
 T. 10b, N. 20. "Alas, so all things." *abab | ababa : bab : cc.*
 T. 11a, N. 50. "When Windsor walls." *ababcdcd | efe : fgg.*
 T. 11b, N. 15. "Set me whereas." *abab | cdcd | ef[e]f[g]g (?)*.
 T. 12a, N. 17. "I never saw." *abba | cddc | effe | gg.*

(*That*, l. 5, = so that; *yet*, l. 8, = up to this time; *clad*, l. 9, = being clad; *that*, l. 10, refers to black; so, l. 12, sums up the preceding lines.)

- T. 12b, N. 17. "The golden gift." *abab | cdcd | efef | gg.*
 T. 28a, N. 44. "The great Macedon." *abab | cdcd | fef | gg.*
 T. 28b, N. 46. "Divers thy death." *abab | cdcd || efefgg.*
 T. 30, N. 44. "Th' Assyrian king." *abab | cdcd || efefgg.*
 T. 32, N. 40. "The fancy which." *abab | ababa | cac | cc.*
 T. 218, N. 47. "In the rude age." *abab | cdcd | efef | gg.*

(*blam'd* and *claim'd* probably not rhymes.)

- N. 48. "Norfolk sprung thee." *abab | cdcd | efef | gg.*

Eleven of these sonnets rhyme as follows: *ababcdcdedefefgg*; one rhymes *abbaacdceffegg*; one, *ababababababcc*; one, *abababababaa*; one, *ababababacacc*. The sonnet sometimes attributed to Vaux rhymes *ababababababcc*.

The combination of the lines into verse-periods presents no small variety. In two (T. 4, 32), the first twelve lines make a unit, with the couplet added. (This is the case also with the sonnet of doubtful authorship.) In six others, there is a division, more or less decided, into four-line stanzas (T. 8, 9b, 12a, 12b, 218; N. 48). In two, the lines make no distinct system, but

the couplet stands apart from the twelve preceding verses (T. 9a, 28). These ten are alike in placing a decided pause before the couplet.

Three form an octave and sestet (T. 11a, 28b, 301). Two do not seem to be systematically divided (T. 10b, 11b).

That in the sonnets of Surrey we have to do with a form of verse quite unlike Wyatt's is plain. Is the later type developed from the earlier? Certain facts must be observed in the endeavor to answer this question. With one exception, all of Surrey's sonnets are in alternate rhyme. Two of the sonnets have only two rhymes throughout the first twelve lines. One other has but three. In several of the other sonnets the three quatrains have a very slight degree of independence and are separated by very light pauses. In some cases, indeed, the quatrains exist only in the rhyme-scheme and not in fact.

Now, we find in Wyatt many instances of a type of verse-structure in which four or six alternately rhyming lines are followed by a couplet. Surrey likewise affords examples of such forms, and also has written a similar poem of ten lines followed by a couplet ("The sudden storms," N. 80). The rhyme-system is *ababababcc*. Among the poems by "Uncertain Authors" in Tottel's Miscellany are one of nine lines, rhyming *ababababcc* (T. 166); of ten, *ababababcc* (T. 177); of seventeen, *abababacdcdcdcdcc*; besides several of the closely analogous type illustrated in the eleven-line poem, T. 170—*ababa | acac | dd*. Now, there is no difficulty in supposing a fourteen-line poem with but two alternate rhymes in the first twelve lines and a couplet ending to be simply one of the class of six-line, eight-line, ten-line, twelve-line verse-forms constructed on the same principle. The break-up into stanzas, in a language so poor in rhymes as English, would be very natural without any analogy to encourage it; but the existence of the sonnet might well exert an influence on the fourteen-line *strambotto*, if we may call it by that name. The analogy of the sonnet, too, would be likely to make the length of the new form seem preferable to that of the the shorter *strambotti*. While we recognize the probable influence of the sonnets of Wyatt in this way, we cannot easily regard them as the direct

sources of the type. The alternation of the rhymes might be explained as due to the analogy of other forms, but the existence of sonnets with only two rhymes in the first twelve lines and no stanza-divisions would appear to be inconsistent with the notion that the Surrey sonnet is a laxer, more fully developed Wyatt sonnet.

The sonnets of Wyatt are in intention, and oftener than not in fact, Italian sonnets after an inferior model; Surrey's sonnets are a new form derived from the *strambotto*.

H. B. LATHROP.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.